



MY LIFE, MY STORY

MICAÏLA



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

1987-1994



Accomplishments Earned

Micaila

I grew up in Taunton, MA—ironically where I live now. I have an older brother—but we didn't grow up together because he was 13 years older than me. He is a Marine Veteran as well—he served for 20 years as a fighter pilot. I graduated in 1987 at 17. I joined the Marines through the delayed entry program and started bootcamp in September of 1987. All the guys took bets on when I would drop out. I kept telling them I would win the pool and I did. I turned 18 a week after I graduated.



After I graduated I didn't know what was next—I had achieved my goal. I went away to my MOS school in Lake Hurst, NJ. My program was Aircraft Launch and Recovery. There were four other females so I wasn't the only one.

Then I went to my first duty station in Okinawa, Japan. When I got to my

work-station there were 52 guys and me. They had never had a female there before so they had to make a lot of accommodation for me. They had to find me a bunk room, a shower—even a bathroom I could use.

As time went on they treated me like a little sister—they gave me a hard time but no one else could. I was there for 18 months and then I went to Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center at Twentynine Palms California for five years. We did infantry



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and ground support. We were the only air wing unit on base. People made fun of us at first—saying ‘swing the wing.’ But they were surprised by how much we could do. We ran the whole air force unit—we were our own self-contained city out there in the desert. We had line cooks, medics, mechanics. We could support any aircraft that came in—including helicopters or fighters. Our main job was to support Combined Armed Exercises (CAX). They would do it for six to eight weeks and then take a week off.

I was there for five years. We would joke that my monitor had forgotten about me, but I really enjoyed it there. I could go to LA, Las Vegas, Big Bear Mountain—we could go skiing and then later that same weekend go to the beach. I made a lot of trips.



I medically retired and was discharged in 1994. I didn't want to come back to Massachusetts. I was used to being away and didn't want to come back to the cold and snow. So, I went to New Orleans. I had friends there and enjoyed it. I stayed for 18 months and through the VA Vocational Rehab Program I went to Louisiana State University in January of 1996. I didn't finish school then.

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I moved to Atlanta for a little while and was there when 9/11 occurred. I moved back home in 2002. I worked at Raytheon's global headquarters for five years as a human resource analyst—I did all of the short-term disability claims for their 74,000 employees. Then I worked at the VA for five years.

I started as an executive assistant to the Chief of Social Work and then was a Program Assistant to the Chief of Staff.





I am service connected largely for a mobility/stability issue. Last year, on October 16, 2019 I was matched with a Great Dane service dog named Rabbit. She was one of ten puppies, and they were all named after Winnie the Poo characters. She is from the Service Dog Project in Ipswich, Massachusetts. All they do is train Great Danes for people with mobility/stability issues. She's awesome. She helps brace me while getting up and provides support when I'm walking. She's very mellow when she has her service

vest on, but as soon as it's off she has this crazy puppy energy—she's only two and a half.

Now I am a Veteran Service Officer and have been for three and a half years. I am also currently studying at Bridgewater State University for a degree in Studio Arts with a concentration in Photography. The VA Vocational Rehab Program has already approved me for my Master's. I would like to do Public Policy after.

My advice that I give all my Veterans is use your VA benefits. They are always there for you—you earned them and you should do what you can to get them. Don't think that other people need them more than you.



Micaïla

I am a huge advocate for women Veterans and am most proud of graduating from Marine Corps bootcamp. It is a major accomplishment that you earn.

There's a saying—in the Army you are soldier, in the Airforce you are an airman, in the Navy you are a sailor, but in the Marine Corps you are a Marine.

